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ABSTRACT

Workshops concerning adolescent development explored problems of adolescents, schooling and adolescence, preparation for adulthood, leisure and recreation, as well as values, culture, and change in relation to the development of youth. The discussion of adolescents' problems identified major problem areas, (emphasizing problems of communicating with significant others and of conflicting values), advanced proposals for alleviating some of the problems, and identified priority areas for research efforts. The discussion of schooling identified adolescent needs for which schools should be responsible as well as issues for research. After identification of several broad themes, the discusion of preparation for adulthood focused on the role of the home and delineated two problem areas in parental involvement: quality parent/child interaction and parental involvement in schools and parent-teacher associations. Here, too, areas requiring further research were identified. The discussion of leisure and recreation pointed out the need to establish through research the importance of leisure and recreational activities in reducing behavior disorders of youth. The broad discussion of values, culture, and change on adolescent development narrowed to explore value conflict and related themes, and to propose recommendations for research. (RH)

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WORKSHOP II

Main Theme

Adolescent Development

A. Problems of Adolescents

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B. Values, Culture and Change in Relation to Adolescent Development

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C. Schooling and Adolescence

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E. Leisure and Recreation

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IIA. Problems of Adolescents

The seventeen participants identified the following major problem areas:

(1)	Communication with	– parents – teachers – siblings – peer
(2)	Conflicting Values	– theirs with elders and parents – modern vs. traditional – own vs. other cultures – theirs with changing values
(3)	Schooling	– emotional stress and anxiety – self-concept – conflict between planners and pupil – conflict between planners and pupil – examinations – interpersonal relations
(4)	Physical and Biological Changes	– developmental process – developmental tasks – stress – sex – self-control
(5)	Leisure and Recreation	
(6)	Adjustment to	– changing environment – biological changes
(7)	Loneliness	

Problem areas 1 and 2 i.e. communication and conflicting values were chosen for further discussion with the latter receiving the most attention in the second session. Among the many examples of conflicting values cited were:

(1) Difference between rural and urban living values.
(2) Difference between expectation of sex roles.
(3) Different religious values.
(4) Conflicting values within parents themselves – parents who were brought up in the traditional way are presently bringing up their children using Western methods and ideals. They feel threatened when their children exert their independence.
(5) Difference between school and home values.
(6) 'Unfair' economic demands of parents: parents who expect their children to look after them and insist that they send money home. The children are caught between the need to support the parents and their own needs which are already difficult to meet with their salaries.
(7) Identity problems as a result of changing roles of males and females.

In discussing problem area 'communication', participants examined the reasons for the lack of communication with parents. The reasons are:

(1) Parents lack time.
(2) Competition with television.
(3) Parents' fixed ideas and imposing them on children.
(4) Parents do not know how to listen.
(5) Different education/educational background of parents.

This lack of communication and 'empty homes' tend to drive pupils to undesirable behaviour and activities.

The workshop also spent some time on problems arising from physical, biological and psychological changes and concluded that such changes are sources of stress to the adolescent. Moreover, at that age, they are also particularly sensitive and have to be handled carefully.

The following general proposals to help to alleviate, if not to overcome, some of the problems were made:

(1) Educating parents about adolescent problems.
(2) Educating adolescents to cope with some, if not all, of the problems.
(3) Retraining of teachers to help them to cope with adolescent problems.
(4) Parenting programmes for youth.

The above can be achieved through the mass media, television, radio, family planning units and voluntary organisations. In order to help adolescent with serious problems, an increase in the number of trained counsellors is advocated.

Numerous research problems were proposed. It was agreed that the following research problems are important:

(1) Identifying the problems of adolescents and their intensity. It was suggested that this should be done in several stages. There should be a free response questionnaire at the initial stage because the inventory may not include problems which are genuinely experienced by the adolescents and they may check problems which are not genuinely felt by them. This questionnaire should be followed by case studies to learn more of the problems and to ascertain their intensity. Many problems are likely to be felt by students but they are not serious and may have little effect on the behaviour and mental health of the adolescents. From the free response questionnaire and case studies, an inventory can be drawn up. This will enable cross-cultural comparisons to be made. With such comparisons, we may be able to identify how culture can generate problems for the adolescents. The inventory can be used by counsellors in the initial stage of counselling for it will enable the counsellor to gather a general picture of the situation.

(2) Case studies to enable parents, teachers, counsellors and educators to have knowledge of what the adolescents expect of them and how they view their world and that of the adult.

(3) Identification of coping strategies of adolescents. A much more effective way for parents, teachers and counsellors to help adolescents to overcome their problems is to know how the successful/effective adolescents cope with their problems. Not only are some adolescents more capable in coping with their problems but also some of them are capable of coping with one set of problems but not with another. Knowledge of the coping strategies of adolescents will enable the teacher training institutions to train teachers to help adolescents to cope with their problems.

(4) Constructing diagnostic measure to identify high and low-risk adolescents. Such knowledge will help to nip the problem in the bud.

(5) Research to identify the relationship between self-concept and adjustment ability.

(6) Knowledge of the sexual development of adolescents, their feelings and also how they cope with them.

(7) Investigation and the extent of conflict between traditional and current values.

The following recommendations were made:

(1) A need for large-scale research to obtain national norms and to gather base-line data.
(2) There is a need for a dialogue between researcher and practitioner. This dialogue should not be restricted to the practitioner informing the researcher what data are needed and the researcher providing the practitioner with the research findings. The practitioner should take an active part in the planning and conduct of the research.
(3) A more systematic and effective method of dissemination of knowledge and research findings.

IIB. Values, Culture and Change in Relation to Adolescent Development

After a preliminary discussion of problems relating to changes in values occurring in contemporary Asian societies, it seemed clear to the group that the theme of 'Values, Culture and Change in Relation to Adolescent Development' might well be studied by examining perceived conflicts of values.

Some of the major sources of such conflicts brought forward by the participants were related to intergenerational differences, particularly in regard to the degree of autonomy accorded to adolescents in regard to marriage, getting a job, and the educational demands placed on adolescents by their parents. Other potential sources of conflict discussed were the differential treatment of siblings and of boys and girls, and the transition from rural to urban living.

After these discussions, three themes emerged as possible foci for research:

(1) Identification of perceived sources of value conflict. (The distinction between the existence of a problem and the perception of a difference as a source of conflict was stressed).
(2) Methods of coping with value conflicts – positive and negative.
(3) Developmental changes in perceptions and coping strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To examine these issues, the group proposed that:

(1) The age range for adolescence should be interpreted broadly, i.e. 10–20 years, as many Asian young people are still at school at the

age of 19–20 and do not enjoy adult status.

(2) The study should be cross-cultural and cross-national. (The members of the group included representatives from Malaysia, Australia and Thailand, and the two chairpersons were from Australia and the Netherlands).

(3) Both boys and girls should be included – there may be an interaction between age and sex which shows that the ages of greatest conflict differ among boys and girls.

(4) Rather than attempt a wide ranging and hence superficial survey, it would be better to concentrate on in-depth treatment with special groups whose characteristics could be defined. 'At risk' groups would meet these criteria and provide a valuable source of data on those who coped successfully and those who did not. If desired and if feasible, it would be possible also to carry out longitudinal studies to follow up these adolescents over a longer period. The identification of 'at risk' groups would be derived from such sources as statistical and demographic information (e.g. places of rapid housing development, crime and suicide rates), reviews of relevant literature, discussions with relevant persons and field workers, and types of problems frequently dealt with in counsellors' casework.

(5) The research methodology recommended is by structured interview. Both open-ended and closed format questions could be used but the interview schedules should be short and the questions simple but relevant to the context and the groups. Interviewers should be trained carefully as social desirability in responding will be a factor to be considered.

Using this approach, the investigation of the problem could be carried out either on a large or a small scale, and over a period of time using a series of different groups. This approach also has some immediate practical applications as ways of alleviating stress arising from conflict may be developed on the basis of the evidence obtained. This is acceptable cross-culturally as it does not rely on the use of instruments designed for different cultures or normed on inappropriate subject populations. It is also adaptable to any number of Asian countries as the identification of 'at risk' groups will always be in terms of the context of the subjects' own social and cultural environments.

IIC. Schooling and Adolescence

The group identified the needs of adolescents that schools should be responsible for. We listed the major ones as cognitive, adjustment, social

and personality and psycho-motor. It was felt that, by and large, schools were not meeting these needs. For a majority of students, the school curriculum was inappropriate. There was too much emphasis on vocational skills and not enough on what we choose to call 'living skills'.

Adjustments were required and these related to:

(1) an emphasis on meaningful learning rather than examination oriented learning;
(2) greater consideration of the demands of society;
(3) the focus on 'overall' development; and
(4) guidance and counselling.

These adjustments had implications for teacher-training programmes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) Discontinuation of the practice of 'streaming'.
(2) More extra-curricular activities that involve parents as well.
(3) A greater measure of career guidance and counselling should be made available to students and parents.

The following areas for research have been identified:

(1) *Guidance and Counselling*
The perceptions of parents and students with regard to what a counsellor does and should do. Data on different ethnic groups can be collected.

(2) *Parent/Teacher Association* (PTA)
The amount of contribution to the school made by the PTAs should be ascertained. The assumption is that the socio-economic status and educational level of parents are determining factors of PTAs and their effectiveness.

(3) *Parents' Ambitions*
The status that parents attribute to various professions/jobs can be measured by asking the parents to rank order them. At present, parents tend to choose high-status professions for their children. It will be useful to ascertain if there is any difference between what parents want for their children and what the children think they themselves are capable of.

(4) *Students' Expectations*
A measure of the students' own expectations of success will be helpful. Are their expectations realistic? How do we find out who *really* makes the decision about careers?

IID. Preparation for Adulthood

FIRST MEETING

This was essentially a brainstorming session on the workshop topic 'Preparation for Adulthood.' It was generally acknowledged that there was a paucity of localised Asian research on the topic and whatever research that was forthcoming was, in many cases, limited to small-scale investigations. There was a need for national/cross-national investigations of this important area.

Several broad themes were identified in the wide-ranging discussion.

(1) *Role of the Home in the Preparation for Adulthood*

Participants stressed the need to examine or even re-examine child-rearing practices, family relationships and the value-orientation of the home/family unit in so far as these may affect the preparation of adolescents for adulthood.

(2) *Role of the Education System in the Preparation for Adulthood*

Among the questions raised were 'What is the worth of the educated man?' How far does the education system effectively help adolescents participate in organised groups? Does it provide leadership training or suitable leisure activities? The role of moral education, 'family life education' and the development of values were discussed.

(3) *Preparation for the World of Work*

How far does the education system prepare adolescents for work? work? Is there a mismatch between the education system and the dynamics of labour market?

The role of career guidance was raised. How realistic is career guidance in our schools and institutions of higher education? Does it develop in our adolescents unrealistic expectations which society will not be able to fulfil?

The challenges facing rural youth was also highlighted, recognising that many of the countries participating had sizeable rural population.

SECOND MEETING

In its second meeting, the group decided to focus on the first of the three themes identified in Workshop I i.e. 'The Role of the Home in the Preparation for Adulthood'. This was to enable a closer examination of

this theme and to identify possible, though tentative, research areas for subsequent consideration.

In the examination of the role of 'the home', it was felt appropriate that a distinction be made between homes in three settings: (1) rural (2) urban-slum and (3) urban.

Urban Setting

In the light of the rapidly changing urban lifestyle and with the prospect of having both parents working, participants asked whether the family could *still* play a crucial role in the preparation of adolescents for adulthood.

The group identified two problem areas in parental involvement in the preparation for adulthood.

(1) Exposure of children to their parents, not only in terms of the amount of time spent with children but with the quality of the time spent.

(2) Parental involvement in the education system with particular focus on parent-teacher associations (PTAs).

Among the questions raised and discussed were the following: what do parents perceive of the PTA's? *More crucially*, 'Does parental participation in the education system help prepare children for adulthood?'

Possible Research Area: Is there a significant difference in achievement, motivation, adjustment etc. between children whose parents take an active part in school activities and those who do not? The role of parents outside the formal education system was also considered. What is the role played by childrens' exposure to art, music, dance, self-defence classes/activities in their preparation for adulthood? Could the involvement of children in these activities actually be perceived as compensation for direct parental involvement in their children's environments? How much of the preparation of adolescents for adulthood actually reflects parental needs rather than child-centred needs and interests.

Rural Setting

The brief discussion on the rural setting focused on rural-urban migration and the 'culture-shock' of rural adolescents moving to urban centres for employment/education. Among the issues raised were 'What kind of support system would fully residential schools provide in the preparation for adulthood?'

THIRD MEETING

Recommendations

(1) Recognising that both the school and the home have a crucial role to play in the preparation for adulthood, the group *recommends* a reorganisation of PTAs so that they would also concern themselves with issues relating to the personal development of the child.
Students also have a supportive role in PTAs and it is recommended that PTAs also be parent-teacher-student associations.

(2) While efforts at career guidance are commendable, the group recommends the enlargement of the range of available jobs that students are exposed to.

(3) In regard to (2) above, a directory of jobs and their descriptions (as is currently available) is commendable. However, this directory would need to be updated regularly and disseminated to schools.

FOURTH MEETING

The group identified the following research areas in addition to those indicated during the second meeting:

(1) Identification of needs of youth in the light of their preparation for adulthood. What do youth expect from their parents? What are the needs during different stages of their growth: early childhood, late childhood, early adolescence, late adolescence?

(2) The validation and adaptation of tests of aptitude for different job types. Having developed/adapted/validated these instruments (e.g. tests of dexterity, mechanical aptitude etc.), there is a need to define norms of performance required by different occupations across different countries in the Asian region.

IIE. Leisure and Recreation

Following discussions, the group made a number of recommendations as indicated below.

(1) The Problem – Recognition of the importance of leisure and child and adolescent development.

(2) Research Area – Need for investigation into the importance of leisure and recreational activities in the developing phases of the child and the adolescent in reducing behaviour disorders from 0–4, 5–12, 13–19 year old age group.

(3) Involvement – Parents
Teachers
The candidates themselves
Community
The agencies/government
Children
Adolescent

(4) The Research – Phase I: Collection of data as to the perspectives of leisure time activities from
(a) Parents
(b) Teachers
(c) Subjects and in rural/urban settings.

Cognizance is taken of the culture, religion, ethnic groups, socio-economic status and personality of individuals.

Phase II: Collection of data as to the availability of leisure time activities
- in the community
- in schools/institution
- at home.

Phase III: Correlation of leisure/recreational activities in reduction of behaviour problems in rural/urban child and adolescent population. The above data is to be correlated transculturally.

Phase IV: Recommendation to be made to the government and curriculum planners.

(5) Tools (instruments) Interviewing Techniques.
Questionnaires.
Observations.
(The study should have the same instruments for cross-cultural investigation with minimal change to suit the locality or area).

(6) Funding – To investigate resources available in each participating country. Efforts be made to agencies in and outside Malaysia for financial assistance.

(7) Personnel – Available persons from institutions of the country of research. Research officer be appointed for a period of two years.